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ABSTRACT

Physical aggression in dating relationships has become a serious problem. Because knowledge of violence in marital relationships has expanded to include dating relationships, some of the attitudes of college students toward violent behavior in dating relationships are examined here. Also discussed are ways in which demographics and life history may affect attitudes towards dating violence. Subjects included 193 undergraduate and graduate students at Middle Tennessee State University. Packets, which included one of four scenarios, were given to the students who then answered questions about these incidents. The results revealed that men were seen as more aggressive than women, and jealousy was perceived as a source of violence in dating relationships. Women were seen as more justified in performing violent acts, but did not report using more violence in self-defense than men. Women were also seen as more justified in using violence in self-defense or in response to physical violence from a partner than were men. Violence was considered more acceptable in serious relationships versus casual relationships. Those who witnessed violence between their parents considered the violence in the scenario as less aggressive than those who did not witness violence between their parents.(Contains 18 references.) (RJM)

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ED 412 448

DATING AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

Physical aggression in dating relationships has become a serious problem. Since knowledge of violence in marital relationships has spread to dating relationships, more attention needs to be given to the problem. The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of college students towards violent behavior in dating relationships, and also to assess how demographics and life history may affect attitudes towards dating violence.

The study was conducted at Middle Tennessee State University and included 193 undergraduate and graduate students. Packets and informed consent forms, as approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee, were presented to classes as a whole, and those who did not wish to participate experienced no penalty. The packets were developed by the researcher and included one of four scenarios, followed by questions about each. The packets also included a questionnaire which consisted of background items and questions assessing attitudes towards violence in dating relationships.

The results revealed that men were seen as more aggressive than women, and jealousy appeared to be seen as a source of violence in dating relationships. Women were seen as more justified in performing violent acts, but did not report using more violence in self-defense than men. Women were also seen as more justified in using violence in self-defense or in response to physical violence from a partner than men. There was a significant difference in the way those in serious versus casual relationships were viewed when committing a violent act, in that it was more acceptable in serious relationships. Lastly, those who witnessed violence between their parents saw the violence depicted in the scenario as less aggressive than those who did not witness violence between their parents, suggesting that they had more accepting attitudes towards violence in dating relationships. The implications of the findings for future research were discussed.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Much attention has been given to the subject of marital and family violence through the past several decades. Only since the early 1980's, however, has much attention been focused on the subject of violence in dating relationships. At one time, many people thought violence was reserved for the intimacy of marital relationships, but this is no longer true. As research has shown, violence in dating relationships has become a serious, widespread problem of which people need to become aware. It appears that since dating violence has been brought into the spotlight, reports of its occurrence have continued to grow, doubling since 1982 according to one estimate (Stacy, Schandel, Flannery, Conlon, & Milardo, 1994). Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, and Ryan (1992) also suggested a rise in the overall prevalence rate, reporting that over half of their respondents have committed some type of aggressive act against a dating partner. The importance of studying violence in dating relationships can be seen in the previously mentioned estimates and also Matthews' (1984) statement, "since premarital relationships are typically viewed as the context in which lovers are socialized into later marital roles, further investigation of courtship violence will increase the understanding of this transitional stage" (p. 151).

To examine physical aggression, one must first understand what it is. Aggression is defined by Brodbelt (1983) as "any physical or psychological injury or attempt to injure another person" (p. 274). Tontodonato and Crew (1992) expanded the definition of physical violence, defining it as "any deliberate act of physical contact with another person in an offensive manner, including slapping, spanking, shaking, kicking, biting, hitting with fists, punching, shaking, striking with an object, pushing/shoving, throwing things, and threat or use of a weapon" (p. 6).

In today's society one tends to think of an abusive relationship as one in which the male is abusing the female. This, of course, is not always the case, as many studies have shown (e. g., Bernard & Bernard, 1983; Bookwala et al., 1992; Sigelman, Berry, & Wiles, 1984). However, not many studies have addressed the attitudes towards women who abuse men. Are women abusers seen with the same stigma as men, or do people have the same attitude towards aggressive behavior, no matter which partner performs the act? Are females who use violence seen as being more justified than males who use violence? What role does jealousy and acting in self-defense play in violent behavior? Does the seriousness of the relationship affect the acceptability of violent behavior in dating relationships? Do people who are aware of others experiencing violence have more accepting attitudes toward dating violence?

These and other questions were addressed by this research. The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of college students towards violent behavior in dating relationships, and also to assess how demographics and life history may affect attitudes towards dating violence. Of particular interest was whether males and females would be seen as equally aggressive when performing the same violent acts. By understanding attitudes towards violent behavior in dating relationships and the role demographic and life history information plays in forming these attitudes, solutions for stopping dating violence by changing attitudes may be identified.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study attempted to determine if males are seen as more aggressive than females when performing the same violent act. It also attempted to determine if violence in a serious relationship is seen as more acceptable than violence in a casual relationship. This was done by presenting each subject a scenario in which either the male or the female was the aggressor in a dating relationship, and whether the relationship was serious or casual.

This study also attempted to examine the role of demographic and life history information in attitude formation relevant to the hypotheses, in order to determine whether this information would predict attitudes toward violence in dating relationships. This information was also used in order to determine whether demographics and life history (relevant to the hypotheses) would predict responses to the scenario. This was done by presenting each subject a questionnaire inquiring about each of these areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the first studies of dating violence using college students was conducted by Makepeace (1981), who attempted to develop an instrument for measuring and studying dating violence, to estimate the prevalence of dating violence among college students, and to identify the forms of violence and social correlates of dating violence. He reported that one-fifth of those surveyed had been involved in some form of violence in a dating relationship. He further reported that the majority of subjects personally knew of someone who had been involved in a violent relationship. Makepeace (1991) found jealousy to be the best predictor of dating violence, followed by arguments over drinking behavior and sexual denial. In regard to alcohol, half indicated that their partner had been drinking and approximately one-third reported that they had been drinking. In this study, males were more likely to report themselves to be the aggressor and females were more likely to perceive themselves as having been the victim. Violence tended to occur on multiple occasions, and only about half of those in violent relationships ended the relationship. The other half continued the relationship, and some even became more deeply involved.

Many of the findings of Makepeace (1981) were replicated in a later study. Matthews (1984) found that 22.8% of the respondents reported some form of involvement in violent relationships, but over half experienced violence with only one partner. It is interesting to note that even among those who did not use violence, 25% felt that there may be some occasions on which violence may be necessary. He further concluded that females tended to feel equally responsible for the violence, that violence was equally interpreted by victims and abusers as love, and that violence may not be perceived as unusual or unacceptable. Thirty-one percent felt their relationship worsened, but 43% reported improvement after experiencing a violent act, although most of those who reported violence in their relationship stated that they would prefer to learn a better way to deal with relationship problems. Eleven percent of those who reported violence indicated that it was of a serious nature (i.e., threats involving a knife or gun, beatings, or hitting with an object). Jealousy was cited as the reason for violence by 31% and communication differences which led to frustration were cited by 34%. This study differed from the Makepeace (1981) study in that it did not support the statement that females would perceive their partners as responsible for the violent act, and also the low presence of alcohol at the time of violence. Matthews (1984) concluded that provocation or circumstance may be what produces violence,

rather than opposite beliefs.

Another study by Makepeace (1987) examined social factor differences between those that have and have not experienced dating violence, and between male abusers and female victims, with several implications. The best predictor of violence was having been fired on multiple occasions. High and low income were related to receiving violence for women. Equalitarian values were found to be associated with increased dating violence. Two social factors were found to differentiate between abusers and victims: lack of father closeness and frequent church attendance among abusers. It is interesting to note that male abusers were more frequent church attendees than other males. Makepeace (1987) suggested that there was little support for the patriarchy theory of dating violence, which he described as "courtship violence [that] is more common among frequent church attendees because they have greater exposure to male supremacist values" (p. 91). He pointed out that there was a higher rate of dating violence among those with no religion and equalitarian views. Male abusers were found to be more approving of violence than victims, but no more than other nonoffending males. Makepeace (1987) concluded that male abusers and female victims exhibit similarly problematic social profiles. He went on to state that the resolution of unmet developmental needs may be an important factor in understanding dating violence.

Bernard, Bernard, and Bernard (1985) examined sex roles and found that conflicting sex roles seemed to be a cause of abuse between partners. They reported that "masculine" (traditional) men who rejected feminine characteristics were more prone to violence in romantic relationships. Women in this study who rejected the "feminine" role were more likely to be abused than those who accepted the traditional role of women. Thus, Bernard, Bernard, and Bernard (1985) suggested that less traditional women may threaten a male who is sex-typed as masculine, thus causing him to become violent. Among other suggested explanations were that less sex-typed women may be more likely to initiate abuse or that these women were more likely to receive retaliatory abuse after initiating abuse, Thus, the researchers suggested that to combat abuse, men should try to get away from the traditional sex roles and women should try to identify more with the traditional feminine sex role.

Brodbelt (1983) suggested that aggression is learned through the socialization process, in which an individual learns attitudes, values, and behaviors that are needed to function in society. He further stated that because children learn by imitation, these attitudes, values, and behaviors are primarily taught by the family. He found that among the college population, a significant degree of aggression (31%) was used, including threats, pushing, slapping, and punching. Brodbelt (1983) further stated that although 23% reported alcohol to be involved with the act of aggression, other factors outweighed alcohol use. He also suggested that sex roles are important, stating that a typical woman is likely to identify with a traditional sex role and be nonaggressive, where a male may have learned that the cultural norm is for him to be aggressive. It is interesting to note that after an incident of aggression, most females did not end their relationship with their partner, and also that some reported hitting back. According to Brodbelt (1983), this indicated that "violence may breed violence".

Roscoe and Callahan (1985) suggested that there may be a pattern to what they term "relationship violence", finding a similarity between the dating experiences of college and high school students. They reported that violence was less common in adolescent dating relationships (1 in 10) than in college dating relationships (2 in 10), supporting the intergenerational and modeling theories of violence. Roscoe and Callahan (1985) stated that the findings supported Makepeace (1981) in that the main causes of violence were jealousy and alcohol consumption.

They also found that violence was interpreted as anger, confusion, and love. The effects of violence on the relationship were also the same as in the Makepeace (1981) study, ranging from termination of the relationship to improvement.

Hockenberry and Billingham (1993) stressed the importance of Brehm's psychological reactance theory, citing that people attempt to maintain control of their own personal freedoms, and that when threatened, one will experience reactance arousal. Hockenberry and Billingham (1993) examined the relationship between psychological reactance and violence in dating relationships. They suggested that those in violent dating relationships may feel their personal sense of freedom is being threatened, and thus psychological reactance and violence appeared to be associated in mutually violent relationships. However, it was unclear exactly how they were related.

Violence may be used as a control strategy when one does not have other skills to implement or because using violence has been effective in the past (Follette & Alexander, 1992). Follette and Alexander (1992) also saw violence in the family of origin as an important influence in violence in dating relationships. They examined the relationship between witnessing and experiencing aggression in the family, and later dating violence, and also assessed current problem-solving styles. They found that family variables did not add significantly to predicting communication patterns. However, Follette and Alexander (1992) supported the statement that males' aggression toward their partners was related to physical and verbal aggression by that partner. They stated that there may be a possible pattern of escalation that occurs between couples. Follette and Alexander (1992) also examined the relationship between relationship satisfaction and violence, finding that those unsatisfied in their relationship emitted more negative behavior. They concluded that violence in the family of origin did not fully explain later violence in dating relationships, although it may have created a vulnerability. More importantly, they seemed to suggest that once violence was used effectively in a dating relationship, it would continue for lack of a more effective way of problem-solving.

Bernard and Bernard (1983) also stressed the importance of modeling abusive behavior seen or experienced in the family of origin, and thus stressed the importance of the socialization process. Thirty percent of the students in this study reported some involvement in an abusive relationship as either the abuser or the abused. They further reported that of the 15% of males that reported abusing a partner, most were also abused by their partner; thus, 19% of the total males in the study reported being abused by a partner. In contrast, more females reported abusing a partner (21%), but most also reported being abused by their partner. However, 38% of the total females reported being abused by their partner, which lead Bernard and Bernard (1983) to suggest that males may have been underreporting abusive behavior. They concluded that adhering to traditional attitudes towards women does not predict whether men will or will not be abusive. Also, although the importance of modeling was noted, the researchers found that there was no relationship found between the type of exposure a child may have had in the family of origin and whether or not they later became abusive themselves; they were equally likely to produce abusive behavior in later relationships. However, Bernard and Bernard (1983) did note that students seemed to participate in the same forms of abuse that they experienced or observed as a child, thus suggesting that they seemed to be taught how to be violent. Finally, Bernard and Bernard (1983) found that there was no relationship between one's attitudes toward women and one being an abusive male or abused female, suggesting that if socialization processes are not related to abuse, then modeling must play a role in abusive behavior.

Billingham and Notebaert (1993) suggested that individuals who came from a divorced family may have experienced lasting effects of the divorce in later relationships, in that they may

have felt less satisfied and may have self-selected into violent relationships. Those from divorced families may not have learned the same ability to resolve conflicts as those from intact families. Billingham and Notebaert (1993) found that these individuals reported the use of violence as a strategy to resolve conflicts more than those from intact families. Their results further indicated that individuals from divorced families used more violence, and also attributed more violence to their partners, than those from intact families. In fact, this study suggested that whether or not the individual came from a divorced family was a better predictor of the use of violence in a dating relationship than was the individual's sex. Billingham and Notebaert (1993) concluded that those from divorced homes may select dating partners differently.

A study by Bookwala et al. (1992) examined several predictors of dating violence, and reported that the largest predictor of violence was the receipt of violence from a partner. Significant predictors of violence for men were high scores on attitudes toward violence and verbal aggression, and less traditional sex-role attitudes. Significant predictors of violence for women were less accepting attitudes toward violence, more traditional sex-role attitudes, feelings of jealousy, and higher levels of interpersonal and verbal aggression. Over half of the subjects reported having committed some type of aggressive act against their partner at least once during the relationship, suggesting a rise in the overall prevalence rate. Although this rate is alarming, less than 5% had committed a serious act of aggression (i.e. beating up their partner or threatening with a weapon). Bookwala et al. (1992) noted that women were more likely to engage in most acts of violence than men. However, they made an important distinction between the strength of men and women. They stated that since men possess superior strength, the impact of violence on one's partner may be different. In fact, they argued that the women may be acting in self-defense.

Sigelman et al. (1984) also examined predictors of dating violence, based on the belief that sex role attitudes and the degree of power one has in a relationship may predict violence. They found that men who abused tended to be young, low in income, traditional in their attitudes toward women, abused as children, and currently living with a woman. Men who were abused tended to be low in income and living with a woman. The researchers were better able to identify a woman's status as an abuser or nonabuser than a man's, correctly identifying a woman's status 63.25% of the time. Many times, women who abused were lower in social desirability and abused as children. Also, women who were abused generally were living with a man, abused as a child, and scored lower in social desirability. These findings showed that abuse was more likely to occur in more serious relationships, such as engagement or cohabitation. Living with a partner was the most powerful predictor of being the target of abuse for both sexes.

Further, Sigelman et al. (1984) reported that approximately 54% of the males and 52% of the females in the study reported committing at least one physically abusive act at some time in a dating relationship, which suggested a much higher incidence of violence than other studies. In this study, more men than women reported being the victim of the abuse of at least one act of violence, and women also tended to use more severe forms of violence than men; however, the abuse was often mutual. Over half of those in abusive relationships reported that relationship was ongoing, and only approximately 14% of those who ended the relationship attributed the breakup to only the abusive behavior. Of those surveyed, 43.4% felt their partner's behavior was at least "somewhat justified". Sigelman et al. (1984) suggested that women may be more likely to be violent in relationships in which there is a discrepancy in attitudes towards women and when there is a power imbalance. They suggested, therefore, that discrepancies in sex role attitudes and power imbalances may be better predictors than which partner is more liberated or who

holds more power in the relationship.

It is alarming that some people actually feel violence in dating relationships may be justified in some situations. Roscoe (1985) examined whether dating violence was seen as appropriate or inappropriate by female college students. He found that approximately 70% felt at least one form of violence was acceptable and more than 80% felt that there were situations in which dating violence was warranted. Only 21 % felt violence was never appropriate in a dating relationship. These percentages may not seem as alarming after looking at some of the circumstances in which subjects felt violence may be warranted.

Listed as circumstances in which violence was acceptable were such things as self-defense, prevention of sexual abuse, and when a partner was out of control. More alarming circumstances that were listed were jealousy, getting a partner's attention, and while playing. Also suggested by Roscoe (1985) was that as females proceed through college, they may become more tolerant of the violence.

Smith and Williams (1992) failed to support the cycle of violence theory, studying the effects of domestic violence on dating violence. Examining high school students revealed that although there was a higher incidence of dating violence in those from abusive homes, less than one in five of these students from abusive homes reported abuse in a dating relationship, indicating that they viewed violence as negatively as those from nonabusive homes. Smith and Williams (1992) concluded that being from an abusive home did not mean that one would necessarily be in an abusive relationship as an adult. However, those who were abused by their parents tended to feel that uncontrollable anger may justify being abusive, and to use the same violent methods as their parents. More of those from violent homes ended a relationship because of a display of violence than those from nonviolent homes. However, more of those from violent homes continued to date a person who acted violently than those from nonviolent homes. Smith and Williams (1992) suggested that those from abusive households saw anger as a justifiable reason for violence because they may never have learned to control violence within the family context. They also suggested that anger may have been seen as traditional behavior, and that the child transferred this to a later dating relationship.

Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) examined gender differences that influence people to use and receive violence, and the relationship of control and dating violence. They based their study on the probit model in which, according to the researchers, there is an unobserved variable underlying violence, which is control in this study. Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) suggested that disputes over control in the relationship would result in violence, especially if the abuser witnessed violence in childhood. They acknowledged that the injury women incur is greater than men, and that women may hit in retaliation. The results suggested that the seriousness of the relationship and personality dimensions explained dating violence for men and jealousy explained it for women. Women were more likely than men to be the victims of violence, to use violence, and to witness violence between their parents. In fact, it was reported that the average woman was approximately four times more likely to receive violence than men. Women were more likely to score higher on expressiveness, to be dating older men, to be in longer relationships, and to be dating more partners.

Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) reported that men were likely to score higher on instrumentality, to be dating younger women, to have fewer partners, and to have been dating their partner for a shorter time. They suggested that a man scoring higher on expressiveness than the average man may be more emotional or devoted to others, and thus possess characteristics that may promote violence. They further found that men who did not see

physically abusive acts against women as violent were more likely to perform an act of violence. Older men were found to be more likely to be violent than younger men; however, the researchers acknowledged the possibility that this tendency may eventually begin to decrease with age. The longer a man was in a relationship, the more likely he was to abuse- the same held true for women. Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) concluded that what was important in women using violence was frequent dating, longer relationships, and more than one dating partner. For men, it was the length of the relationship. They found that men who received violence in childhood may tend to receive it in dating relationships. They also suggested that men high in instrumentality were less likely to be controlled and may not get involved with women who want to control them, or may leave when a conflict puts them in danger of becoming violent. According to these authors, men who scored higher on expressiveness were more likely to receive violence because they permitted others to take control or because they used it first.

A relationship of longer duration and fewer partners was found to increase the probability of receiving violence, Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) suggested that experiencing violence in childhood may affect only men who receive violence, and that women higher in instrumentality may be more likely to end a relationship or leave the situation. Another factor affecting whether women received violence was religion, in that if a man attempted to control her religiosity and she did not agree, he might become violent. Also, for women, the more frequently one dated a particular person, the more likely it was that violence would occur. Thus, the more dating partners a woman had, the less likely she would be to suffer from dating violence. Again, jealousy seemed to be a factor in receiving dating violence. Stets and Pirog-Good (1987) suggested that a possible reason for women receiving more violence than men may be that they challenge their partners' right to control them. Thus, the researchers found that using and receiving violence operated differently for women and men.

In another study by Stets and Pirog-Good (1989), 17% of men and 27% of women were physically abused by one or more dating partners, but the most common forms were milder forms of abuse. They failed to find support for the idea that receiving physical abuse tended to occur in multiple relationships. They suggested that the abusers go from relationship to relationship, and those who receive abuse only receive it when they are involved with the abuser. They found that females who were abused dated more men than those not abused and were dating longer, as was found in their previous study (Stets & Pirog-Good, 1987). It should be mentioned that approximately 40% of those who were abused perceived the relationship as being abusive. They suggested that it may depend on the severity of the act, whether the victim thought the abuser intended to inflict injury, or whether the act was in self-defense as to whether the relationship was perceived as abusive.

Another study examined gender differences, finding some support for a social learning theory (Tontodonato & Crew, 1992). The researchers found that the best predictors of violence for females were parent-child violence, drug use, and knowledge of the use of violence by others. The predictors for males were drug use, parental divorce, and the belief that violence between partners was justifiable, It should be noted that alcohol was not found to play a role in violence between dating partners. Tontodonato and Crew (1992) found that males were more likely than females to use violence in dating relationships. For females, the use of dating violence seemed to be influenced by the knowledge of others' use of violence. The researchers noted a trend that justification of violence may be associated with the use of dating violence. More males tended to agree that physical force is justified in some situations as punishment. Tontodonato and Crew (1992) found that their predictors produced false negatives, predicting that one will not use violence, but in fact that person does.

Stacy et al. (1994) examined the rates and types of violence, comparing gender differences. They stated that the rate of dating violence has doubled since 1982, when comparing statistics at the University of Maine. They suggested that one in five college students have committed an act of violence in their most recent dating relationship. An increase in certain types of violence was also detected, including being hit with something, kicked, bit, or hit with a fist. However, they suggested that more severe types of violence had declined. Stacy et al. (1994) noted that more women than men reported the use of violence. However, they suggested that women may be using violence in self-defense because 42% reported violence in their dating relationship, but only 13% reported initiating the violence. They suggested that men were initiating more violence than women and that men may have been denying their use of violence. They further suggested that women may have been more likely to report using violence because of the "lack of social stigma attached to women hitting men" (p. 8). This study supported other studies in that over half of the relationships were considered serious at the time of violence and that the violence seemed to be less severe.

Although the overall rate of violence has reportedly doubled at the University of Maine since 1982, from 10% to 21% in 1992, one should keep in mind that Makepeace (1981) estimated the overall rate of violence to be 21% in 1981. One possible explanation is that the rate may be increasing in some areas, but that the overall rate is approximately the same. However, Stacy et al. (1994) suggested that the explanation may be that they requested that the students consider only their most recent relationships, where Makepeace (1981) considered all dating relationships. They further suggested that "individuals consistently choose similar partners and, although the individuals within the relationship change, the pattern of using violence to solve conflict does not" (p. 8).

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1 was that males would be seen as more aggressive than females when performing the same violent acts. Hypothesis 2 was that the overall use of violence by females would be seen as more justified than the overall use of violence by males. Hypothesis 3 was that jealousy would be identified as an initiator of violence occurring in a dating relationship. Hypothesis 4 was that females would report more use of violence in self-defense than males. Hypothesis 5 was that violence in dating relationships would be seen as more justified when a female acts in self-defense, or in response to physical aggression from her partner, than when a male responds violently for these same reasons. Hypothesis 6 was that there would be a significant difference in the way those in serious versus casual relationships were viewed when committing a violent act. Finally, Hypothesis 7 was that those who were aware of others who have experienced violence would rate the violence depicted in the scenario as less aggressive than those who were not aware of others who have experienced violence.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Subjects

This study was conducted at Middle Tennessee State University and included 193 undergraduate and graduate students from several psychology classes. Eight of the respondents had to be excluded from the data analysis because of invalid questionnaires, leaving 185 respondents (62 men and 123 women) to be included in data analysis. All data was collected during the spring semester of 1996 and subjects participated on a volunteer basis. Questionnaires and informed consent forms, as approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee, were presented to classes as a whole, and those who did not wish to participate experienced no penalty.

Demographic data revealed that 83% of the respondents were single, and 14% were married. Most respondents reported not having children (87%). In terms of age composition, 69% were between the ages of 18 and 23, and 20% were between the ages of 24 and 30. In terms of racial composition, the respondents were 88% white, 9% black, 2% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 1% other. Over one-half of the respondents were classified as Seniors (52%), and 31 % were classified as Juniors. In this study, 29% were in the College of Education, 26% were in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, 20% were in the College of Mass Communication, 14% were in the College of Liberal Arts, 8% were in the College of Business, and 4% were undecided. At the time of data collection, 55% reported having one dating partner, and 37% reported having no dating partner. Also at the time of data collection, 13% reported living with their dating partner, and 12% reported living with an abusive partner. Most respondents reported never having experienced violence in wit dating or marriage (53%), and 30% reported first experiencing violence between the ages of 16 and 20.

Apparatus

The informed consent form assured the subjects that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. It further stated that the data would be stored with the Research Advisor and would be destroyed after data analysis. (The actual data forms were destroyed, but the advisor kept a copy of the data on a computer disk.) A separate slip was given to participants as they turned in their materials, with names and phone numbers of places that they could go for counseling, should they need help or want to discuss any issues raised by this questionnaire.

The packets were developed by the researcher and included one of four scenarios, followed by questions about each. Each scenario included two independent variables gender of the aggressor (male, female) and seriousness of the relationship (serious, casual), The scenarios used a measurement scale to rate the dependent variables, with a range from one to five on all questions that dealt with the scenario (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). The dependent variables (answers to each question) were how aggressive subjects saw the behavior, how justified they felt the aggression was, how deserved they felt the aggression was, how likely they felt the aggression would be to occur again, how badly they felt the person's feelings were hurt who received the aggression, how likely they felt the relationship would be to continue, how aggressive they felt the aggression would be if it was changed to a less serious form, and how justified they felt the aggression would be if the seriousness of the relationship was changed.

Attached to the scenario was a questionnaire which included the background items of sex, marital status, parents' marital status while growing up, highest level of parents' education, age, year in school, race, college of major, number of children, ages of children, number of current dating partners, income, and living arrangements. Also included were items involving living with an abusive partner, the sex of the dating partner, spirituality and church attendance, alcohol use, awareness of friends experiencing violence in a dating or marital relationship, witnessing or directly experiencing violence from a parent or step-parent while growing up, use of physical punishment on children and age of the oldest group of children on which one would use physical punishment, and the age of first experience with physical violence in a dating or marital relationship.

The next section asked subjects to rate the acceptability of a male, and then a female performing each of several violent behaviors on a dating partner (1 = never acceptable, 5 = always acceptable). These behaviors included slapping, shoving, pushing, grabbing, kicking, biting, hitting, choking, punching, beating up, throwing or smashing objects, hitting with an object, and threatening with a knife or gun. The next section asked subjects to rate their level of agreement with several statements (1 = disagree, 5 = agree). These statements involved the justification of a male using violence in self-defense, when responding to the physical aggression of a female, or never, and then these questions were repeated for females. This section also included questions about communication differences, jealousy, uncontrollable anger, and reasons for violence occurring (i. e., out of love, anger, confusion).

A section was included in which only those currently in a dating or marital relationship were asked to answer questions using a rating scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very or great). These questions included the seriousness and satisfaction of the current relationship. Also included was whether their current partner had ever been physically violent towards them or whether they had ever been violent toward their current partner. The next section involved past relationships, with questions rated on a scale of one to five (1 = not at all, 5 = great extent). These questions inquired about receipt of physical violence used by a former partner on the subject, the seriousness of the violence, the role of self-defense and jealousy in the violence, and the seriousness of injuries incurred as a result of physical violence. These questions were followed by inquiring about the result of violence to the relationship and who was responsible for the violence occurring. These same questions were repeated, modified slightly to inquire about physical violence used by the subject on a former partner.

Because this testing instrument was developed by the researcher, no reliability or validity data was available, although it did have good face validity. However, the researcher felt this was acceptable because a satisfactory testing instrument was not found. This testing instrument was constructed by referring to, and then expanding, previous research.

Procedure

The packets were administered to classes of undergraduate students by the researcher in a random manner. The participating professor volunteered her classes because of interest in the subject area. Subjects were read the instructions by the researcher. A copy of these instructions were included in each packet. Subjects were asked to read the questions carefully and to periodically check the numbers on the answer sheet with the numbers on the scenario and questionnaire to make sure that they matched. Subjects were assured of confidentiality and anonymity by not asking for names on the packet or answer sheet. They were asked not to make any marks on their packet, or put personally identifying information on the answer sheet.

Subjects were told that the study was voluntary and anonymous, and that information reported was confidential. Subjects were told that choosing not to participate would not lower their grade in the class. They were told that they could skip questions that they were uncomfortable answering, and could stop at any time without experiencing any penalty. Subjects were given an informed consent form and were instructed to hand it in separately from the questionnaire. They were then told that the professor would have access to the results of the study by August, 1996, if they were interested in the outcome of the study, and were thanked for their participation. They were then asked to complete the packet that they were given, and to turn the materials in when finished. To help ensure anonymity and confidentiality, they were asked to place the answer sheet in one envelope, and the consent form in another envelope. They were then given the names and phone numbers of places where they could go for counseling if they so desired.

Design of the Experiment

For Hypotheses 1, 2, and 6, "Dating" referred to the length of time the couple in the scenario portion of the questionnaire had been dating (two months or two years), and "Aggressor" referred to the gender of the person committing the act of physical aggression in the scenario (male or female). These variables were then analyzed using a 2 x 2 analysis of variance (ANOVA), to determine whether these factors influenced attitudes toward violence. A comparison of means was used to analyze the data relevant to Hypothesis 3. The data relevant to Hypothesis 4 was analyzed using an independent groups t-test. A pairwise comparison t-test was used to analyze the data relevant to Hypothesis 5. The data relevant to Hypothesis 7 were subjected to a stepwise regression analysis in an attempt to determine if the respondent's personal experience with physical violence in a relationship could predict his or her rating of aggressiveness of the physical violence committed in the scenario. All data for the following Results section were analyzed using the SAS personal computer program.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis 1 stated that "Males would be seen as more aggressive than females when performing the same violent acts". This hypothesis was addressed using Question 2 (Q2) from the scenario portion of the questionnaire. This question asked, "How aggressive would you rate Kathy/John's behavior?". A significant main effect of Aggressor was found, such that males were rated as more aggressive than females, $F(3, 180) = 8.53$, $p < .01$. In addition, no main effect of Dating was found, $F(3, 180) = 1.02$, $p > .05$, nor was any interaction effect found, $F(3, 180) = .33$, $p > .05$.

Hypothesis 2 stated that "The overall use of violence by females would be seen as more justified than the overall use of violence by males". This hypothesis was addressed using Questions 3 and 4 (Q3, Q4) from the scenario portion of the questionnaire. Q3 asked the respondents to rate the justification of the physical violence depicted in the scenario. A significant main effect of Aggressor was found, such that females were rated as more justified than males in slapping their partners, $F(3, 180) = 34.51$, $p < .01$. In addition, no main effect of Dating was found, $F(3, 180) = 1.86$, $p > .05$, nor was any interaction effect found, $F(3, 180) = 1.02$, $p > .05$.

Question 4 (Q4) asked the respondents to rate how much the physical violence was "deserved". A significant main effect of Aggressor was found, such that males were rated as more deserving of the slap than females, $F(3, 180) = 44.00$, $p < .01$. In addition, a significant main effect of Dating was also found, such that partners who had been dating for two years were rated as more deserving of the slap than those who had been dating for two months, $F(3, 180) = 10.56$, $p < .01$. Further, no interaction effect was found, $F(3, 180) = 2.47$, $p > .05$.

Hypothesis 3 stated that "Jealousy would be identified as an initiator of violence occurring in a dating relationship". This hypothesis was addressed by asking respondents to rate their agreement with Question 58 (Q58), "Jealousy is the source of violent behavior between couples". The mean Likert rating was 3.85 on a 5-point scale, with a standard deviation of 1.10. This mean was compared to an expected neutral mean Likert rating of 3.00. In comparing the two means, it appears that most respondents saw jealousy as a source of violence occurring in a dating relationship.

Hypothesis 4 stated that "Females would report more use of violence in self-defense than males". This hypothesis was addressed by asking respondents to rate the extent of their use of violence in self-defense (Question 77). These data were then grouped by gender of the respondent and analyzed using an independent groups t-test and a significant effect was not found, $t (42) = -.34$, $p > .05$.

Hypothesis 5 stated that "Violence in dating relationships would be seen as more justified when a female acts in self-defense, or in response to physical aggression from her partner, than when a male responds violently for these same reasons". This hypothesis was addressed by producing comparisons of two pairs of questions. One comparison involved the responses to Question 51 (Q51 -rate the justification of physical violence if a male acts in self-defense)

and Question 54 (Q54 -rate the justification of physical violence if a female acts in self-defense). A pairwise comparison t-test revealed a significant difference between the ratings on these two questions, such that females were seen as more justified in using violence in self-defense than were males, $t(182) = -8.26$, $p < .01$.

The second comparison involved Question 52 (Q52 -rate the justification of physical violence if a male is responding to aggression from a female) and Question 55 (Q55 -rate the justification of physical violence if a female is responding to aggression from a male). A pairwise comparison t-test also revealed a significant difference between the ratings on these two questions, such that females were seen as more justified in using violence in response to aggression from a partner than were males, t (182) 10.33, $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 6 stated that "There would be a significant difference in the way those in serious versus casual relationships were viewed when 'committing a violent act". This hypothesis was addressed by four questions relating to the scenario, Questions 2, 3, 4, and 8 (Q2, Q3, Q4, Q8). Q2 required a rating on the perceived degree of "aggressiveness" of the physical violence depicted in the scenario. Q3 required a rating of the perceived degree of "justification" of the physical violence depicted in the scenario. Q4 required a rating on how much the partner "deserved" the physical violence. Q8 required a rating on the perceived degree of aggressiveness of a "milder" form of physical violence (pushing instead of slapping). Significant main effects of gender of the aggressor were found for all questions, Q2: $F(3, 180) = 8.53$, $p < .01$, Q3: $F(3, 180) = 34.53$, $p < .0l$, Q4: $F(3, 180) = 44.00$, $p < .01$, and Q8: $F(3, 180) = 20.58$, $p < .01$. However, these data do not address the acceptability of violence based on the length of the relationship.

The evidence for Hypothesis 6 is found in the main effect of length of the relationship (Dating) in these same questions. For Q2 and Q3, no main effects of the length of the relationship were found, $F(3, 180) = 1.02$, $p > .05$, and $F(3, 180) = 1.86$, $p > .05$, respectively. However, for Q4 and Q8, significant main effects for length of the relationship were found, $F(3, 180) = 10.56$, $p < .01$, and $F(3, 180) = 8.38$, $p < .01$ respectively. Thus, Q4 revealed that partners who had been dating for two years were rated as more deserving of the aggression than those who had only been dating for two months. Further, Q8 revealed that pushing was rated as more aggressive in a two month old relationship than a two year old relationship.

In addition, no interaction effects were found for any of the above ratings: Q2 $F(3, 180) = .33$, $p > .05$, Q3: $F(3, 180) = 1.02$, $p > .05$, Q4 $F(3, 180) = 2.47$, $p > .05$, and Q8: $F(3, 180) = 1.74$, $p > .05$.

Hypothesis 7 stated that "Those who were aware of others who have experienced violence would rate the violence depicted in the scenario as less aggressive than those who were not aware of others who have experienced violence". This hypothesis was addressed by determining if the respondent's answer to Q2 (an aggressiveness rating of the physical violence depicted in the scenario) could be predicted by his or her answers on any of the questions assessing his or her familiarity with relationship violence (Q29-violence experienced by friends, Q30-violence witnessed between parents, Q66-violence experienced from current partner, Q67-violence inflicted by respondent on current partner, Q68-extent of violence experienced from a former partner, and Q69-extent of violence of a serious nature experienced from a former partner).

A stepwise regression analysis was computed and a significant relationship was found between Q30 and Q2, $R (53) = -.47$, $p < .01$. The regression analysis produced the following equation: $Q2 = -.418 (Q30) + 4.619$. None of the other variables tested were significant.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

In today's society one tends to think of an abusive relationship as one in which the male is abusing the female, but this is not always the case. However, of particular interest in this study was whether the male was seen as more aggressive than the female when performing the same behavior.

Analysis of the data indicated that males were seen as more aggressive than females when performing the same violent act, regardless of the length of time the relationship had existed. This supported Hypothesis 1, that males would be seen as more aggressive than females when performing the same violent act. This showed the different perception of males performing violence versus females performing violence in dating relationships; it was considered worse for males to perform violent acts. This could have been because the males were more likely to cause pain, and females were less likely to inflict pain. It also could have been the stigma that "wife beaters" have in our society, or it simply could have been because men are the ones who are expected to give the violence.

It seems unfair that males are judged more harshly than females when committing the same violent act. However, when strength is taken into consideration, it makes sense that men can do much more physical damage than women, and thus should be judged more harshly. The only solution is to stop violence. Everyone must agree that it is wrong and unacceptable. To do this, the topic of dating (or marital) violence must be brought out into the open and discussed, not just dismissed as a problem for the couple to work out on their own. Children must be taught at an early age that relationship violence is wrong, and adults must work together to prevent relationship violence.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the overall use of violence by females would be seen as more justified than the overall use of violence by males. This hypothesis was also supported in that female aggressors were rated as significantly more justified than male aggressors in the scenario when slapping their partner, regardless of the length of the relationship. An obvious reason for this would be that males are typically stronger than females and can inflict more harm.

Hypothesis 2 was further supported when the respondents were asked to rate how much the physical violence was deserved in the scenario. Male partners were rated as significantly more deserving of the slap than female partners, regardless of the length of the relationship. One possible explanation is that in the scenario presented, respondents may have seen the female as fighting back. In addition, partners who had been dating for two years were rated as significantly more deserving of the slap than those who had been dating for two months, regardless of the gender of the aggressor. This may suggest that the respondents felt that the aggressor had more of a fight to exercise control over the other person since there was more commitment involved. Society's views must be modified such that violence is never seen as justified or deserved, no matter how long the couple has been dating.

Hypothesis 3 was supported in that jealousy was found to be a source of violent behavior between couples. Thus, jealousy was identified as an initiator of violence occurring in

a dating relationship. This supported Makepeace (1981) who found jealousy to be the best predictor of dating violence. This implies that people need to learn more adaptive ways of dealing with jealousy, through counseling, seminars, and/or educational classes.

No evidence was found to support Hypothesis 4, that females would report more use of violence in self-defense than males. Thus, the female respondents in the sample did not report more use of violence in self-defense than the male respondents. This suggests that males may be reacting to violence by females in the same way females react to violence by males. It further suggests that females may not see themselves as victims of male violence and thus may not feel the need to act in self-defense. It may also suggest that males feel the need to act in self-defense just as often as females- however, this is unlikely considering the difference in strength between the two sexes.

Support was found for Hypothesis 5, that violence in dating relationships would be seen as more justified when a female acts in self-defense, or in response to physical aggression from her partner, than when a male responds violently for the same reasons. In both of the comparisons done to test this hypothesis, females were rated as more justified than males when using violence in self-defense situations, or when responding to physical aggression from a partner. Thus, even though females did not report using more violence in self-defense than males, when females did act violently in self-defense or in response to physical aggression from their partner, the respondents felt it was more justified than when males acted violently. This may suggest that respondents saw the female as a victim who was fighting back. These findings show the double standard between males and females.

To end relationship violence, both sexes must learn that violence is not acceptable. Societal views must change, so that violence by females is not seen as any more acceptable than violence by males. Questions two, three, four, and eight were used to address Hypothesis 6, which examined the way those in serious versus casual relationships were viewed when committing a violent act. Q2 required a rating on the perceived degree of aggressiveness of the physical violence depicted in the scenario. Q3 required a rating of the perceived degree of justification of the physical violence depicted in the scenario. Q4 required a rating on how much the partner deserved the physical violence. Q8 required a rating on the perceived degree of aggressiveness of a "milder" form of physical violence (pushing instead of slapping).

In the scenario presented, males were rated as more aggressive than females, female aggressors were rated as more justified than male aggressors in slapping their partners, males were rated as more deserving of the slap than females, and male aggressors were rated as significantly more aggressive than female aggressors when the aggression consisted of pushing instead of slapping. While these data address the issue of acceptability of violence based on gender, they do not address the acceptability of the violence based on dating (length of the relationship).

However, support for the hypothesis was found in Q4, which revealed that partners who had been dating for two years were rated as more deserving of the slap than those who had been dating for two months. Thus, the respondents may have felt that it was okay to slap a dating partner when in a committed relationship. Support was also found in Q8, in that the act of pushing instead of slapping was rated as more aggressive in a two month old relationship than in a two year old relationship. This suggests that the respondents did see pushing as an aggressive act, but found it to be more acceptable, and possibly not as violent as slapping when in a longer relationship.

To end violence, society must learn that being in a committed relationship for a longer period of time does not make violence any more acceptable or deserved than when in a relationship for just a short period of time. It seems that abused women stay in long term abusive relationships and make excuses for their mate, such as "He's not like this all the time," or "He makes it up to me in other ways." These women need to be taught through educational programs that violent behavior is just as unacceptable for them as it is for women in a short-term relationship. Both males and females must recognize the problem and realize that no one deserves to be treated in an abusive manner under any circumstances.

Partial support was found for Hypothesis 7, which stated that those who were aware of others who have experienced violence would rate the violence depicted in the scenario as less aggressive than those who were not aware of others who have experienced violence. Knowledge of violence experienced by friends, violence experienced from a current partner, violence inflicted by a respondent on a current partner, the extent of violence experienced from a former partner, and the extent of violence of a serious nature experienced from a former partner did not predict how a respondent would respond on Q2, an aggressiveness rating of the physical violence depicted in the scenario. Thus, knowledge of violence experienced by friends and personal experience with violence did not predict answers for Q2.

However, analysis did reveal an inverse relationship between the respondent's answer on Q2 and Q30. Thus, as the extent of violence witnessed between parents by the respondents increased, the less aggressive they rated the physical violence depicted in the scenario, providing support for Hypothesis 7. This suggests that children who see violence in the home when growing up have more accepting attitudes of violence later in life. This supports Brodbelt's (1983) theory that attitudes, values, and behaviors are primarily taught by the family. It also supports Smith and Williams' (1992) theory that those from abusive households see anger as a justifiable reason for violence because they may never have learned to control violence within the family context. If this is true, interventions need to be made in the home so that children will not witness violence between parents. Parents need to be aware of how their actions affect their children. They need to set an example for their children by dealing with conflict in nonviolent ways.

While this study did reveal significant findings, there were some limitations to be noted, including the sample from which the data were collected. Although there were not as many males as females in the study, these results are most likely generalizable to most college-aged people. However, since the subjects were all college students, and all were enrolled in psychology classes, the generalizability of the findings may be limited. On the other hand, as the demographic data indicated, the subjects were spread out among all the various colleges listed, and as such, the results may be more generalizable. Another limitation to be noted is the testing instrument. As stated previously, no reliability or validity data is known, because the researcher developed the instrument. One should note that much more information was gathered than was used to test the hypotheses. Thus, further hypotheses could be made and more research could be done in analyzing the data. Finally, one should note the inconsistent N's reported in questions 68 - 81. It seems that respondents may have become confused or not read the directions carefully, and thus affected the total N.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes of college students towards violent behavior in dating relationships, and also to assess how demographics and life history may affect

attitudes towards dating violence. The intent of this research was to use these areas to find solutions for stopping dating violence. All hypotheses were supported or partially supported, with the exception of Hypothesis 4. In short, men were seen as more aggressive than women, and jealousy appeared to be seen as a source of violence in dating relationships. Women were seen as more justified in performing violent acts, but did not report using more violence in self-defense than men.

However, women were seen by respondents as more justified in using violence in self-defense or in response to physical violence from a partner than men. There was a significant difference in the way those in serious versus casual relationships were viewed when committing a violent act, in that it was more acceptable in serious relationships. And finally, those who witnessed violence between their parents saw the violence depicted in the scenario as less aggressive than those who did not witness violence between their parents, suggesting that they had more accepting attitudes towards violence in dating relationships.

Further investigation is warranted to examine whether the findings of this study can be generalized to other groups, such as high school students or marital partners. Future research should also include those without a college education, as they may have different views of dating violence. Additional research is needed on what traits, may lead to physical aggression and why people continue to perform and receive aggression. Lastly, more predictors of dating (and marital) violence need to be identified, so that early interventions may be made to stop the violence. The importance of continuing research in this area should be noted, as only 21% of college females felt violence was never appropriate in a dating relationship, and more than 80% of female college students felt that there were situations in which dating violence was warranted (Roscoe, 1985).

Dating violence is an issue that will not go away and must be addressed. The issue must be talked about openly so that people become aware of how serious the problem has become. Interventions must be made, beginning with teaching children that violence is wrong, and teaching adults better coping mechanisms. By raising awareness, relationship violence can be combated and reduced.

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